

Maximizing Listening Learning through the Application of CALL

BATOOL IBRAHIM AL BASHIR

DR. MAHMOUD ALI AHMED

College of Languages

Sudan University of Science and Technology

Sudan

Abstract:

This study is to investigate how CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) affects the learning of listening amongst ELF learners. The significance of the study derives from how to investigate the extent to which CALL affects the learning of listening, not to mention that Sudanese EFL learners tend to find listening a worrisome skill to learn in the absence of the native environment where English could be properly practiced. As the study aimed to test the extent to which the application of CALL in teaching listening influences the learning process of this skill among Sudanese university level students. The researcher adopted an experimental design in her study as a pretest and a protest were conducted. The study sample was 100 university freshmen. The population was divided into a control group and an experimental group. The control group was taught the listening course through a traditional method while the researcher exposed the experimental group to CALL. The experimental group was taught using computers and technical devices in addition to communication application Whatsapp to exchange communication and practice listening.

Key words: CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), listening, ELF students

INTRODUCTION

The role of computers is no longer not just to save information and playing games ,computers have demonstrated to have a more critical part in the public eye as they play as a mean for learning .Late innovative advances have made the likelihood of better approaches for instructing and learning. The detached educator focused learning approach has now moved its center towards urging understudies to effectively take an interest in their learning procedure.

Gem (1997) clarified that in the past foreign dialect educating relied on upon showing strategies and showing effectiveness as instructing was dynamic while learning was passive, while the dynamic part is played by the learner.

Starting late, developing a high learning profitability using advancement has been of essential eagerness for some learning associations . Incidentally, taking full ideal position of this potential requires for considering the instructing/learning system in new courses and to pro the advancement itself. Today Computers expect a critical part where they fill in as 'an extra gadget or resource, as a model or a real wonder or system, and as a circumstance to get ready and get prepared customers for genuine assignments and experiences' (Pennington 1995: 11). Concerning second/foreign language teaching and learning, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), described as 'the mission for and examination of usages of the Computer in language teaching and learning' (Levy 1997: 1), offers an unrivaled potential results to give learning experiences that are immeasurable without a computer.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Listening has a crucial position in foreign language learning. Although listening is called passive it is a basic skill in relation to other skills speaking, reading, and writing. Learning

listening is a challenge for EFL learners. In Sudan where English is a foreign language learners face comprehensive problems when they are exposed to the native speakers oral production, therefore improving the way this skill is taught and learnt definitely will solve this issue.

Learning has been affected by modern technology. In the age of information learners are exposed to different sources of information, internet and available software had made a significant change in acquiring knowledge. This generation is largely connected with technology, Sudan is not an exception, in this respect newspapers have claimed that statistics show Sudan to have a leading number of users of the internet via mobile phone. According to Bax (2006) we have to take advantage of the possibilities offered by technology and move towards normalization of the situation when these technologies are used in our daily classwork as naturally as a whiteboard or a course book. Unfortunately in Sudan the use of CALL in the tertiary level is almost missing. Consequently the importance neglectable has encouraged the researcher to investigate in this study the effect of using CALL in the learning of listening among the Sudanese tertiary level students, conducting an experiment to test the difference in the students learning of this skill.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent does CALL promote the learning of listening among Sudanese undergraduate students?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The significance of this study is due to that it sets how to investigate the extent to which CALL effects the learning of both listening and speaking .Not to mention that it adopts an experimental design as far as listening & speaking is concerned

which is a bit rare in Sudanese English Language research library.

The study presents statistic facts that measure the influence of technology in language learning in general and listening & speaking in particular .the usage of technology has widely spread that they became an essential factor of living for some.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Rost (2002), the term listening refers to a complex process that makes us able to understand spoken language. It is the channel in which we process language in real time. Lindsay and Night (2006) indicate that we carry out listening throughout our whole life.

Bueno and Mc Laren (2006) attribute complexity of listening to its psychological and social nature as they explained Listening to be a mental phenomenon , that takes place in a cognitive level inside individuals' heads, and a social phenomenon, which grows intuitively amongst individuals and nature encompassing them... a complex process that should be understood in order to be taught .

Nunan (2001) describes listening as a six-stage process that comprises Hearing, Attending, Understanding, Remembering, Evaluating, and Responding. All stages take place in sequence and rapid successions.

Hearing comes as a response to sound waves stimulating the sensory receptor of the ear. Hearing is the perception of sound regardless of paying attention, as we have to hear to listen, but we need not listen to hear.

The second stage is attending, i.e. paying attention through selections focused upon by the brain. The brain screens stimuli and permits only few to come into focus.

The third stage is understanding which involves analysis of meaning of what communicative events. Symbolic

stimuli are not confined only to words. The meaning related to these symbols is influenced by our past associations and the context in which the symbols take place.

The fourth step is remembering which combines both reception and interpretation besides storage of information in our minds.

The fifth step is evaluating, in which the listener evaluates the message that has been received. This step involves weighing evidence, sorting facts, and deterring extent of bias or prejudice in the message.

The final step is responding, in which the speaker checks if the message has been received properly.

With regard to 'Bottom-up' and 'top-down' processes students tend to use a combination of the two, depending on the different purpose of their listening. Brown and Yule (1983) identify two types of purposes when listening, and they label them as interactional and transactional functions. Learners use interactional language to socially interact with each other, and engage in transactional uses to develop new skills and construct new knowledge.

Likewise, Anderson and Lynch (1988) see the main transactional purposes in the use of language 'to achieve a successful transfer or exchange of information', and "to establish and maintain social contact" in the interactional. Teaching listening should encompass a pattern that allows students the opportunity to listen actively and a teaching method that combines both purposes. Bueno and McLaren Proposed the following pattern (Bueno and McLaren, 2006):

1. Pre-listening to establish a context. Here some activities are done with the purpose to prepare the students for what they will hear.
2. Listening to do the mentioned task or find answers. Intensive listening is provided to students accompanied by some activities.

3. Post-listening, here students are given the opportunity to check their answers to what they have been listening to.

However, there are two approaches to teaching listening skills, the total Physical Response (TPR) introduced by Asher in the 1960s and 1970s, and the natural approach developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983). The total Physical Response (TPR) is based on the theory which states that memory is enhanced through association with physical movement. TPR as an approach to teaching a second language is based, first and foremost a body movement and it is linked to physical actions which are designed to reinforce comprehension of particular basic items (Rodgers, Theodore. S, 2001). Both the Natural and TPR approaches are supported by Krashen's Monitor Model of SLA and grouped within the comprehension approach.

With regard to CALL for listing skills with Total Physical Response, developed by Asher (1977), is frequently used as techniques rather than an approach. It focuses on mental activities. The use of CALL for listening skills through TPR is based an activities that include TPR groups and physical interaction in response to technical instructions received from the computer (Ibid, 2001). On the other hand the Natural approach developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983), focuses on comprehensible input and the optimum affective state of the learner. Potentialities of using CALL for listening skills with the Natural approach comprises the following:

- When using computer technology in teaching and learning listening skills, the computer allows teachers to add multisensory elements, text, sound, images, video, and animation, which provide meaningful contexts to facilitate comprehension.
- Computers allow learners to hear the available input as many times as needed until they feel they understand it.

- Multimedia programs can be designed to present material at different levels with adjustments in speed of delivery according to the learners needs.
- Computers allow learners to develop their autonomy in reviewing and practicing materials as many times as they wish.

Computers can provide immediate non-judgmental feedback and additional assistance to learners, as they correct learners errors without causing them embarrassment anxiety.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher was intended to examine the learning of listening through CALL among tertiary Sudanese students at Sudan University of Science and technology. To achieve that an experimental approach was conducted to study the effect of CALL in the learning of both skills. The study examined the research questions(see chapter one). As the case is in experimental designed research the population was exposed to a pre-test and a post one after the experiment took place .

Population and Sample:

The population of the study is first year students taking English as this major in the Faculty of Languages at Sudan University of Science and Technology; in the academic year 2014/2015. The total number is 100 students. All these students share the same mother tongue and are taught by the same teachers. These students had already studied courses that were supposed to have provided them with the necessary information about the speaking skill. They had studied courses such as: "Listening and Speaking" and "oral communication skills". The objectives of these courses were to develop both listening and speaking.

The students were previously divided into two groups by the Head of the English department A and B .Group A was served as the control group and group B as the experimental group .All students agreed to participate voluntarily in the study .The course for the two groups was taught in the same classroom and time of the day one group studied at Sundays while the other at Mondays. The experimental group was taught by using computers and technical devises in addition to the use of social media applications such as Skype and Whatsapp.

The following table shows the design:

	Assignment	Pre-stimulus measurement	Stimulus	Post –stimulus measurement
Group A (experimental group)	R	O1A	X	O2A
Group B (control group)	R	O1B	Time	O2B

Table (1)

As A=the experimental group, B= the control group, O1pre-test and O2 is the post-test.

If we name the change in the experimental group by C (O2A-O1A) ,and that in the control group C1,then C1-C gives an estimate of the test stimulus

Data Collection Instruments:

As the study follows an experimental design the research tool is the pre experiment test and a post experiment test .The research population was divided into two groups a control group and an experimental group .Each group has a number of 50 students. The researcher set the two tests that where validated by experts. The tests took place considering the experts notices and advice.

Listening pre and post tests

The listening tests were adapted from Anglia Examinations England. Anglia Examinations has been based in Chichester,

England, since 1993. Anglia offers a comprehensive and structured programme of assessing English language competence, from beginner through to full competence as an expert user. This Step-by-Step approach to testing encourages and motivates students to make clear and effective progress.

Validity and Reliability of the Listening Test

The final draft of the test was validated as it had been piloted by experts in both English language and Education experts in assessment. Suggestions and opinions of the experts were considered to modify the test version.

The reliability of the constructs was measured at an aggregate level; the Cronbach alpha test was used on SPSS 15 for Windows (Pallant 2005; Aron *et al.* 2005), and the test result had a good internal consistency with the alpha coefficients of .87.

The tests consisted of four parts the first part was to assess the listening for specific information , the second part was to test to listen for general information , the third was to listen for details .the last part was a cloze test question (dictation)which generally tests the ability to understand context and vocabulary.

Data Analysis Procedures:

The listening test consisted of four parts described as follows:

the skill	Questions	score	Total
Listening for specific information	Part one from b-f	5marks for each	20
Listening for general information	Part two from 1-10	3marks each	30
Listening for details	Part three from 1-10	3 marks each	30
Dictation (cloze test design)	Part four 10 blank spaces	2marks each	20
			100 marks

Table (2)

After the test was marked, the data was collected and coded to be analyzed using the SPSS package to obtain the frequencies percentages ,and t-test .

RESULTS:

T-test results:

	Sig
Pair 1 listen4details - P_listen4details	.435
Pair 2 listen4general - P_listen4general	.004
Pair 3 listening4specific - P_listening4specific	.226
Pair 4 Listening cloze - P_listening cloze	.010

Table(3)

According to statistics if the significance (sig.) in the t-test is less than .05 it has statistic significance. As it appears in the table(3)the variables listening for details and listening for specific information scored significance more than .05 which means there was no difference in the students' performance before and after the experiment. while in the question that required listening for general information sig.scored .004 which indicates that there was a difference in the students' performance before and after the experiment .the table also shows that the students' performance was different after the experiment from before as sig .for the listening cloze variable was .010.

As mentioned above we see that there was change in the students' performance regarding listening for general information as those who scored from 15 above in the pre-test were 70%of the students ,while 80%did in the post test, i.e more students reasonably managed to answer this question.

As for the listening cloze question which was the spelling all the students passed marking from 10 above in the pre-test, thus 26%scored 10 and 74%scored more while in the post test 98%of the students passed ,as 10%of them scored 10

while 88% scored above i.e. their was a better performance in the post test.

The remaining two variables; listening for details and listening for specific information did not score any difference in the students results in the pre and post tests .

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1-More attention should be given to encourage EFL learners to listen to native speakers regularly.
- 2-Educators should benefit from computers to increase the amount and quality of listening the learners may listen to.
- 3- Social media application should be adopted in the teaching of listening EFL.

REFERENCES:

1. Anderson. A. & T. Lynch (1988) Listening. Oxford OUP.
2. Brown, G. et al. (1984) Teaching Talk. Strategies for Production and Assessment Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Brown, H. D. (1994) Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language.
4. Carter, Ronald and Nunan, David (eds) (2002). The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speaker of Other Languages. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
5. Chapelle, A. C. (2001). Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition: Foundations for teaching, testing and research. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Cohen, A. DD. (1997). Language Learning Strategies and Language Use Strategies. Strategies-Based Instruction Workshop. University of Minnesota. U.S.A.

7. Lindsay, C. and Knight, P. (2006) Learning and Teaching English. Oxford: OUP.
8. McLaren, D. and N. Madrid (1996) A handbook for TEFL. Alcoy: Marfil.
9. Morley, J. (1972) Improving aural comprehension. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
10. Murphy, M. j. (1991). "Oral communication in TESOL: Integrating Speaking, Listening and Pronunciation". TESOL Quality. Vol.25, no.1, pp.51-75.
11. Nunan, D and Richards, J. C. (1990). Second language teacher education. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Nunan, D. (2001) Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom. Cambridge: CUP.